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Vol.7 No.314 -- Oct 21 - 28, 2004 Complimentary Copy

COMMUNITY NEWS



Halloween fun with safety in mind

The wizards, ghosts and goblins provide the mythical Halloween setting. Early safety precautions can help keep these trick-or-treat excursions festive rather than nightmarish, according to Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) safety experts.

It is important for families to review safety tips together, said April Beard of the DSHS Safe Riders Program.

This year may be even more of a safety issue because daylight savings time ends at 2 a.m. Oct. 31, Beard said. When we turn the clock back, we'll lose an hour of daylight for children walking through neighborhoods.

According to the National SAFE KIDS Campaign, children are four times more likely to be hit by a car on Halloween than on any other night of the year.

Children are having fun racing from house to house at Halloween, sometimes darting into the street, Beard said. They often are wearing long, ill-fitting or over-sized costumes. And many children may not be accustomed to walking around at night. That's why it is important for adults to remind children of safety precautions and to be especially cautious themselves.

DSHS offers these safety tips for children:

- Σ Look left, right and left again for cars and trucks before crossing the street. Walk on sidewalks. If there is no sidewalk, walk on the left side of the road facing traffic.
- Σ Walk, don't run.
- Σ Don't cut across lawns or go through backyards, parks and alleys.
- Σ Don't hide behind cars or cross the street from between parked cars; go to a corner.
- Σ Never accept rides from strangers or take treats from someone who's in a car or truck.
- Σ Use a flashlight with fresh batteries.
- Σ Wear light-colored costumes and put reflective strips on them. Be sure costumes are short enough so you will not trip.
- Σ Wear comfortable shoes that fit. High heels or big floppy shoes are not safe for walking. Save them for indoor parties.
- Σ Use face paint rather than a mask or hood that covers your eyes.
- Σ Stay away from lighted candles, matches and open fires.
- Σ Be careful around animals. Even pets you know may be scared by costumes and loud or strange noises.
- Σ Trick-or-treat only at houses where you know the people and then only if the porch light is on.
- Σ Don't eat any treats until they are checked by an adult.

DSHS offers these safety suggestions for adults:

- Σ Accompany trick-or-treaters 12 and under.
- Σ Look for a flame resistant label on costumes, masks, beards and wigs.
- Σ Use fire resistant materials when making costumes.
- Σ Be sure children carry only soft, flexible knives, swords or other props.
- Σ Set a time for older children to be home. Know the route they will take.
- Σ Never let a child go trick-or-treating alone. Be sure at least two buddies go together.
- Σ Remove breakable items or obstacles such as ladders, tools and toys from your yard.
- Σ Keep jack-o'-lanterns and lighted candles away from areas where costumes or paper decorations might touch the flame.

DSHS offers this safety information for motorists:

- Σ Slow down in residential neighborhoods.
- Σ Watch for children in the street, on medians and at curbs. Be especially aware that children may cross the street in the middle of the block.
- Σ Enter and exit driveways slowly and carefully.
- Σ Be extra careful backing up in all locations, including parking lots.
- Σ If you are driving children around for trick or treating, be sure they get in and out of the car on the curb side of the car, away from traffic.
- Σ Do not wear a Halloween mask while driving.

Children need reminders every year about Halloween safety, Beard said.

Don't guess how much safety kids know or remember, especially on Halloween when they are focused on treats.

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